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16 August 1981*Jack Anderson*

Space Wars

The world is moving into the bewildering age of space warfare faster than most Americans realize. The development of this awesome new dimension in military tactics has been kept largely hidden from the public by the liberal use of "Top Secret" classification stamps.

There are already dozens of unmanned satellites orbiting the earth that serve as the eyes of the opposing military leaders. It is from such satellites that the Soviet Union would direct many of its military forces in a future conflict.

Pentagon planners saw this threat coming years ago, and embarked on a highly secret program to eliminate—or "negate" in military parlance—the Russian satellites in the first few hours or days of a war. In 1974, the Aerospace Defense Command recommended that by 1982 the United States have the ability to destroy 40 specific Soviet satellites within a 24-hour period.

An ultra-secret directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the priorities the Pentagon has laid out for the elimination of Soviet satellites. The document has been seen by my associate, Dale Van Atta, who confirmed its conclusions from confidential sources and other secret documents.

For what small comfort it may offer, the Pentagon's plans for destruction of Soviet spy satellites do not involve lobbing nuclear warheads into the stratosphere. The reason is that nuclear missiles launched against Russian satellites might well damage American satellites that are also orbiting the earth.

According to the secret directive, there is a maximum of 45 Soviet satellites that will pose a threat to the United States by 1985 and must therefore be destroyed quickly in the event of war. Most of these are in a low orbit, which presumably makes them easier to take out.

The Joint Chiefs' secret directive listed the satellites and assigned the following priorities for their destruction:

Priority 1: The most important Soviet satellite targets are the "electronic ocean reconnaissance satellites," which are used "for detecting and tracking of naval vessels in open or coastal waters." These sophisticated spies in the sky can give Soviet missiles aimed at American ships targeting information that is accurate within about a mile. "In land or air warfare, [they] could also be used to detect airborne warning and control systems, radar sites and operating airfields," the Joint Chiefs' report says. In other words, these supersmart Soviet satellites can not only point the finger at our sea-going attack vessels, but can tip the Russians off to the facilities that protect our ability to retaliate against attack.

Needless to say, these top-priority targets are to be knocked out "as soon as possible" after an outbreak of hostilities.

Priority 2: The Soviets' Salyut space station is only slightly lower on the Pentagon's target scale than the ocean reconnaissance satellites. Salyut can detect missile launches, and give the Russians crucial target data for their missiles. "Photoreconnaissance is believed to be its major activity," according to one secret report. Fortunately, there is only one Salyut satellite.

There are other Soviet satellites in Priority 2, which calls for destruction of targets within 48 hours. They include photographic reconnaissance satellites that can snap detailed pictures of enemy territory and send the films back in recovery capsules, navigation satellites that can help the Soviet navy track down its targets and communications satellites.

Priority 3: There are only two types of Soviet satellites in this category, and the time limit for their destruction is 48 hours, like the Priority 2 targets. These are nine meteorological satellites that provide important weather information, and two surveillance satellites that can keep track of any U.S. launchings of satellites or missiles.

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